

**For Immediate Release**

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**HERSETH SANDLIN ANNOUNCES \$2 MILLION IN NEW FUNDING TO FIGHT MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLE EPIDEMIC**

**Washington, DC (September 30, 2010)** – Today, U.S. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin announced \$2 million in additional Forest Service funding to combat the mountain pine beetle epidemic in the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF). This funding will allow the Forest Service to perform increased thinning and sanitation treatments, which will slow the advance of the outbreak.

“I’ve consistently called for additional Forest Service funding to mount an aggressive and proactive response to the growing pine beetle outbreak in the Black Hills and I’m pleased to see these additional resources helping our state,” said Herseth Sandlin. “The pine beetle infestation has had a dramatic affect on the Black Hills, by increasing the risk of wildfires and putting our rural communities and their economies at risk. This additional funding represents an important recognition on the part of the Forest Service and USDA of the severity of the challenge we face.”

Herseth Sandlin has made it a priority in Congress to ensure that forest managers in Black Hills have the resources and tools that they need to protect the health of the BHNF. On September 22, 2010 Herseth Sandlin called on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Forest Service and the White House to use the resources provided to them by Congress to provide immediate and long-term assistance in the effort to fight the mountain pine beetle epidemic in the BHNF. Yesterday, Herseth Sandlin met with Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell to reiterate the need for additional funding for the BHNF. In August, Herseth Sandlin hosted USDA Deputy Under Secretary Jay Jensen, who helps oversee the U.S. Forest Service, on a tour of areas of the Black Hills that have been impacted by pine beetles and to meet with representatives from local communities and the forest resource industry.

The outbreak, which is the largest in recorded history has occurred in numerous forests across western North America, and in the Black Hills pine beetles have affected over 200,000 acres since the 1990s, killing over 100,000 new trees each year. Federal land managers estimate that approximately 190 million acres of federal forest lands are at unnaturally high risk of catastrophic wildfire and large-scale insect and disease outbreaks due to unhealthy forest conditions. The Mt. Rushmore National Monument recently announced that, for the second year in a row, the traditional Independence Day fireworks celebration will not be held because of concern about wildfire danger caused by nearby trees that have been killed by mountain pine beetles

Herseth Sandlin's efforts to enhance forest health while fostering economic development in western South Dakota has been a top priority in Congress, her recent actions are listed below.

- In September, Herseth Sandlin called on USDA to use its authority to provide immediate emergency funding to combat the mountain pine beetle infestation in the BHNF. Earlier this year, the agency provided emergency funding to fight the Asian longhorn beetle. Herseth Sandlin based her request for USDA's use of emergency authority to release funding to the BHNF on provisions in the Fiscal Year 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill that authorize the Secretary to provide funding to USDA agencies for the "arrest and eradication of contagious or infectious diseases or pests of animals, poultry, or plants." Calling the mountain pine beetle epidemic exactly the kind of emergency for which this provision was designed, Herseth Sandlin requested emergency resources to combat the mountain pine beetles in the BHNF. To view the letter [click here.](#)

- In September, Herseth Sandlin also urged the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to eliminate bureaucracy and allow an emergency response under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To view the letter [click here.](#) Under emergency circumstances, NEPA regulations allow federal agencies and CEQ to agree upon expedited arrangements for compliance with NEPA in order to allow the agency to act aggressively "to control the immediate impact of the emergency." Herseth Sandlin urged the White House to consider the current mountain pine beetle as an emergency and to allow federal forest managers in the Black Hills the flexibility they need to respond effectively to the crisis.

- Also in September, Herseth Sandlin called for increased Forest Service funding for the BHNF next year because it's clear that more funding is needed to respond effectively and aggressively to the ever growing mountain pine beetle epidemic in western South Dakota. To view the letter [click here.](#) Herseth Sandlin noted that following a bipartisan effort she helped lead in the House with Representative Lummis of Wyoming to prevent funding being removed from the region that includes South Dakota, the Forest Service allocated an additional \$2 million in 2010 to combat the pine beetles in South Dakota. Congress typically allocates money for the management of the National Forest System in categories of programs, which is then distributed at the discretion of the Forest Service within its regions. South Dakota is in the

Rocky Mountain Region, also known as Region Two.

- In August, she led a bipartisan group of members of Congress in writing to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, urging him to direct unobligated American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to expand the Forest Service's timber program by as much as \$150 million and hosted the visit to the BHNF by USDA Deputy Under Secretary Jay Jensen.
- In April, Herseth Sandlin joined with Rep. Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming and a bipartisan group of their colleagues, requesting that the USDA develop of a comprehensive and proactive plan for address outbreaks of mountain pine beetles and identifies alternative sources of funding for that effort.
- In December 2009, Herseth Sandlin joined Rep. Kurt Schrader of Oregon in writing to President Obama, to request an increase in forest management resources, to sustain the health of both the Black Hills National Forest and rural communities that rely on forest jobs.
- In December 2009, Herseth Sandlin worked with a bipartisan group of western lawmakers to introduce the Healthy Forests Restoration Amendments Act, bipartisan, common-sense legislation that would address many of the threats that face the Black Hills National Forest, by strengthening the existing tools available to federal forest managers to bring the most diseased and fire prone forests back to health.
- Last year, Herseth Sandlin also joined with Rep. Wally Herger of California to introduce the bipartisan Renewable Biomass Fairness Act, which will provide energy produced from renewable biomass an equal tax incentive as for wind and solar. She also worked with Rep. Kurt Schrader of Oregon to introduce the bipartisan Incentives to Increase Use of Renewable Biomass Act. This bill would establish a program at USDA to provide interest-free loans for converting existing equipment or installing new equipment to use renewable biomass for energy generation, heating, or cooling.

These bills would promote use of renewable biomass, foster job growth in the Black Hills, and help move the nation toward energy independence. They follow on her efforts to broaden the definition of cellulosic biofuels in the Renewable Fuels Standard through the Renewable Biomass Facilitation Act (H.R. 1190). Since 2008, she has worked to broaden the definition of cellulosic ethanol under the new Renewable Fuel Standard to include woody biomass gathered from national forests, including the Black Hills National Forest.

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